TO-DAY HE LOVES ME!

To-day he loves me!—Time stand still!
Haste not, sun, behind the hill!
To-day he loves me: no to-morrow
Can touch this one to-day with sorrow.

As a crystal well o'erspills
With sweet water from the hills,
So my heart o'erbrims with blisses,
Of looks, of love-words, and of kisses.

And through many a day of drouth
Love shall come to draw thereout,
Singing low—though this to-day
Be then a year old yesterday—
"To-day he loves me!" ('Tis Love's way).

OUT OF STEP.

I.

IN MASSACHUSETTS AGAIN.

The girl came in somewhat breathless, but in spite of her red face and her flying hair there was an air of importance about her. She swung her bag of school books on to the end of the kitchen table with a thump.

"I'll bet a dollar you can't guess what I know!" she exclaimed.

Her mother was kneading bread dough at the other end of the table. She paused in that operation to look admiringly at her daughter, who was sixteen, and a bright light in the High School in the village two miles away. This daughter was not, however, in spite of her advancement in the teens, much burdened with dignity, for she leaned half her length on the table that she might reach a dish of dried apples which Mrs. Scudder had just been picking over. The girl put her white young teeth into a thick piece of the fruit; then she threw the bit across the room into the sink.

"I do believe," she cried, "that dried apple is the chewingest thing on the face of the earth."

"You needn't waste them apples, if they be tough," said her mother, with more admiration than reproof in her manner.

"Oh, I guess we shan't fail if we do lose a few," responded the girl, sitting down and resting her arms on the table. She glanced toward the dining-room where the table was set. "I do hope you've got something good for supper, and a lot of it. I'm as hungry as a thousand bears."

"We're goin' to have thickened toast 'n' rhubarb pie," her mother answered.

"Oh, goody! But I want a boiled egg with my toast. I tell you what, mother, a girl can't go to High School and cram, and then walk two miles home without something to build up the tissues. She can't do it."

Cornelia, commonly called "Nely," gave her little schoolgirl laugh as she finished this speech. Her mother smiled more admiringly than ever.

"What be tissues?" she asked.

"Oh, something we have inside of us, and that have to be built up all the time," replied the girl.

"Is that so? We didn't have no tissues inside of us when I went to school," said Mrs. Scudder.

"Of course not. They were not invented then. But, I say, mother, you can't guess what I know," returning to her first remark.

"You're gittin' to know so many things, Nely, that I don't see how I can even give a guess," said the mother with proud humility.

"Oh, 'tisn't anything I learned at school," disclaimed Nely, "but who do you s'pose is going to be our first assistant? Miss Riddle's got to go away. Now, who do you think's going to take her place?"

Mrs. Scudder paused in her painstaking working of the dough.

"Somebody I know?" she asked.

She was deeply interested, as she would have been in the most trifling thing her daughter could have mentioned, and she was grateful for any subject upon which she could talk, as are most women who live in the country, where a small topic is a godsend. She now wished to handle this affair leisurely and extract everything from it.

"Yes, indeed," was the answer. "You know her just as well as you know to pray."

"Nely!" exclaimed her mother, reprovingly.

But Nely had just read in school about how the Sultan went to Ispahan, and had been charmed with the verses; she was now charmed to quote them and to shock her mother at the same time.

"I guess it's Mr. Storer's daughter," now said Mrs. Scudder.

"It isn't. You're miles away," replied Nely, getting up and taking a drink from the cocoanut dipper in the water pail.

"Be you acquainted with the new assistant?" inquired her mother.

"I should say I was. And I've always been in love with her. But may be she's changed."

"Changed?"

"Yes. She's been away more than a year. There! Now I've done it, and you know who it is, and I meant to make you guess a long time. I've a great mind to eat a seed cake, I'm so hungry."

"I wouldn't; you'll spoil your supper. You don't mean S'lome Gerry?" hesitatingly.

"Yes; I do."

"Mercy sakes! But she's in Floridy."

"She's got home."

"But she's consumptive."

"You wouldn't say so if you saw her now. She doesn't look real tough, but she doesn't look sick."

"You don't mean to say you've seen her, Nely? I declare I'm jest's interested 's I c'n be. I know they said she was gittin' well down there, but I never thought she'd come home alive. I'd no idea she would. She had a reg'lar hackin' cough jest like what Hatty Shields had, 'n' she went in quick consumption. You ain't seen her, have you?"

"Yes, I have. I saw her in the recitation-room right after school. She came with one of the committee, and she saw the principal, and she's coming in next Monday, and I'm awfully glad. Mother, I do believe I will eat a seed cake."

"It'll spoil your supper if you do. Supper'll be ready in half an hour. I wish you'd git the bakin' pans 'n' grease 'um for this bread. I forgot it 'fore I got my hands in the dough."

Cornelia returned from the buttery with the long, shallow pans and the bowl of fat. She proceeded with great deliberation to apply this fat to the pans. Her mother presently took out handfuls of dough and pressed them into the baking dishes.

"Then you seen S'lome?" she repeated.

"Yes," said Nely, "and I like the looks of her better than I ever did. She has more in her face, somehow," said this wise person of sixteen.

"Did she speak to you?"

"Yes, she did. I kind of hung round, you know. Almost all the girls had gone, but when I saw her with Mr. East I thought I wouldn't hurry. So I was accidentally on the steps when she came out of the door. We looked at each other. I declare, mother, I do like her face. She was going right along, then she hesitated, and then she put out her hand.

" 'Why, it's Nely Scudder!' she said. Then she kissed me, and I wanted to hug her, but I didn't; I just stood there, and finally I had wit enough to tell her I was glad she had come home; and was she better? She told me she was well now, and was going to be first assistant in place of Miss Riddle. When she said that I wanted to hug her again, for Miss Riddle is a stiff old thing you know——"

"Nely!"

"I don't care; she is a stiff old thing; she must be thirty if she's a day, and I'm so tired of having her look at me and say 'Miss Scudder, less frivolity, if you please.' I don't really believe it would spoil my supper if I ate a seed cake, mother. I'm absolutely starving."

"Eat one then. We'll set right down to the table in a few minutes. Ring the bell for your father to come in. Did S'lome say anything about her mother?"

"No."

"When'd they git home?"

"Day before yesterday. She said it was by good luck that she heard Miss Riddle was going, and as she must go to earning right away, she thought she would apply for the position."

"Where be they goin' to live? The old Gerry place was sold to pay Lyman Gerry's debts after he died."

"I don't know where they are going to live. Of course, I didn't ask questions."

"Of course not. There's your father. You see to boiling your egg, 'n' I'll thicken the gravy for the toast. We'll set down in a minute."

While the family were at the supper table and Nely was actively engaged in supplying material for the purpose of building up her tissues, the talk was exclusively of the Gerry family, of the father who was dead, and the mother and daughter who were left. In the midst of this talk there was a knock at the back door.

Nely answered the summons and ushered in a slim, erect woman, dressed in the plainest black. She was a woman beyond middle age, with eyes somewhat sunken, but having a glance direct and strong and true. Her face was swarthy as if it had been tanned by being exposed to wind and sun. And it was a much-worn face also.

Mrs. Scudder rose from the table hurriedly, making a clatter of dishes as she did so. She went toward her visitor with both hands extended.

"I'm jest 's glad to see you 's I can be!" she exclaimed. "Why, Mrs. Gerry, I sh'd think you'd ben gone ten years! How be ye now you have got back? Do set down. Nely's jest ben tellin' of seein' S'lome. How is S'lome?"

Mr. Scudder had risen also and now shook hands with extreme cordiality, and with a rotary motion that was somewhat hard on the joints of the receiver of his greeting. But Mrs. Gerry, who was deeply glad to see her old neighbors, bore this motion bravely. Her face lighted. Though her voice was steady as she replied, no one could have doubted her joy.

"Ain't you awful glad to git back?" asked Mrs. Scudder. "It always seemed to me as if Floridy was a dretful outlandish, shifless kind of a place; ain't it?"

"'Tisn't much like New-England, that's a fact," said Mrs. Gerry with emphasis.

"Set up 'n' have a cup of tea," urged Mr. Scudder, "and Mar makes mighty good thickened toast," with a grin in the direction of his wife.

"Thank you, I had my supper at half-past five."

"Where be you stayin'?"

"At my brother's."

"Of course. I knew your home was all broke up," sympathetically. "Is S'lome really better?"

"I think she's well," was the reply.

"And it cured her jest stayin' there in Floridy?"

"Yes. You know the climate is very different."

"I s'pose so. But I don't see how jest climate c'n do so much. It don't seem 's if it could."

"Why, mother!" exclaimed the High School girl, shocked at her parent's ignorance, "don't you know that climate is one of the most powerful influences for good or evil on the human being?"

Mrs. Scudder laughed and said, "Oh, sho, now, Nely!" but she glanced proudly at her guest, who was looking smilingly at the girl.

"Salome was just telling me, Nely," said Mrs. Gerry, "that she was glad you were to be one of the pupils at the High School."

"Oh, did she say that?" and Nely's face flushed with delight.

"Yes, indeed." Mrs. Gerry turned to Nely's father. She told him she had called now to ask about that little house he owned at the Ledge. She had heard it was vacant. It was only half a mile from the school where Salome would teach. She must hire a place to live in, and she thought that would be low priced.

"It's dretful out of the way, Miss Gerry," Mrs. Scudder hastened to state; "I'm afraid you'll be awful lonesome there."

"I'm used to being out of the way," replied Mrs. Gerry, "since I've been in Florida. I shan't mind that. Besides, a place in the village would cost too much."

"Do you really mean that you want to hire that Ledge house?"

It was Mr. Scudder who put this question.

Mrs. Gerry repeated her request for it. In a few moments more she had engaged it. She rose to go. When urged to stay longer she explained that Salome had said that she should start out to meet her, and she did not want the child, who had had rather of a tiresome day, to come too far.

"You still have to be ca'ful of her then?" inquired Mrs. Scudder.

"I've fallen into that habit," was the answer, "but really, Salome is well. Do come and see us when we get settled, all of you."

There was a little more talk, and then Mrs. Gerry was walking down the road, and all of the Scudders were looking at her as she went.

"She looks ten years older," exclaimed Mrs. Scudder. "I declare I never seen nothin' beat it. That must be a terrible climate in Floridy. I wonder how Salome looks. I s'pose her mother would have staid there if it killed her if she thought 'twas good for the girl."

"Salome looks changed," said Nely, returning to the table for one more seed cake. "But she's more interesting than ever. I just wish I could go to Florida!"

"'Tain't likely you ever will," remarked her mother comfortably. "Mebby 'tain't all climate that's changed S'lome. Mebby she's ben disappointed down there."

"Disappointed!" repeated Nely, questioningly. She had not yet learned that this word when applied to a girl refers solely to the question of love. To say that such a woman must have been disappointed means that a lover must have proved false to her.

"Yes," said Mrs. Scudder. "P'rhaps she had a beau down there, 'n' he got sick of her. I d' know's you c'n tell much by them Southern men."

"Pooh!" cried Nely, scornfully. "It must be a mighty poor kind of a beau that would get sick of Salome Gerry. I don't believe any such thing."

"But you don't know 'bout them Southern men," went on Mrs. Scudder, somewhat reflectively. Then she looked up suddenly. "Walter Redd went down there. Did he say nothing 'bout any beau of S'lome's?"

"I guess not. You wouldn't catch Walter Redd saying much any way. He's awful gone on her himself."

With this classic remark Nely began to put on an all enveloping 'tire preparatory to washing the supper dishes.

During the process of clearing up after the evening meal the two women kept up a desultory talk concerning the Gerrys; and even after the two were sitting by the lamp, the elder knitting and the younger with her schoolbooks, the subject had not lost its interest. Mrs. Scudder clung to the idea of Salome's disappointment, and Nely persisted in scouting that idea.

Long before the lingering twilight had given place to evening Mrs. Gerry was again at her brother's. When she had left Mr. Scudder's she had walked quickly down the road, hardly glancing to the right or left, but feeling to the bottom of her heart the beauty of the hills and dales that rose and fell about her, all green with the lovely green of the new summer time, all so different, so utterly different from that level stretch of Florida land which she had hated. Yes, now that she was away from it, Mrs. Gerry dared to acknowledge to herself that she hated Florida. The hot days of that summer; the long hours of unblinking sunshine: the white, scorching sand; the trees with thick, glossy leaves; the gloomy gray moss swinging forever from the live oaks. The ocean was all that had been endurable; she had borne that by thinking that it was the same ocean which washed against the New-England coast.

The woman paused in her quick walk when she had reached the top of a long hill. From this hill she saw the roof and the chimneys of the old Gerry place, where her husband had died more than a year ago. The place was sold now. Lyman Gerry had been in debt. Well, the debts were paid, and the sweet-natured, improvident man had paid the last great debt. His widow stood motionless, looking at the house which had been her home for so many years. She was a woman whose soul revolted against change, who longed for the things which had once been hers, just because they had been hers. She struck deep roots down into her native soil. But those roots had been ruthlessly pulled up, or rather, she herself had pulled them up, because she thought she ought. She believed that a person could do whatever was right. That is, for herself she believed it. For Salome—Mrs. Gerry's whole figure underwent some subtle change at the thought of her daughter. Not that she made any movement. She was thinking that she might have been intolerant if Salome had been like the Wares, for instance. The Wares were always "right there"; you knew where to find them; their position was as well defined as the edges of a block of granite. But Salome——

An ineffable tenderness came into the sunken eyes; still the features of the face did not relax or change in any other way.

Mrs. Gerry turned and looked across a pasture that lay between her and her brother's house. At the far side of it, in the open space where the young oaks did not grow, was a girl walking slowly. The woman could just see that this girl was swinging her hat in her hand. The glow from the red west was on that open space of pasture and on the slender figure. The birds were flying this way and that over the girl, giving out their blithe twilight songs. Somewhere far at the right a whippoorwill had begun to sing, melancholy and distant.

Until now Mrs. Gerry had thought she liked a whippoorwill's cry. Now she heard it with Salome's ears, and wondered if the sound would depress her daughter. Salome took such notice of everything, and she was so queer about some things. But then she was well, perfectly well. Her mother could not be too grateful for that.

So intently did she watch that form that she did not see another figure coming up the hill toward her by the road. Just as Salome waved her hat to her mother, a young man joined Mrs. Gerry.

"I'm real glad to see you," he said. "I only just heard you had come. I was going to get round and call this evening."

While he was speaking Walter Redd was holding Mrs. Gerry's hand. In a moment she put her other hand over the large, brown, well-shaped fingers. The gesture meant much with the undemonstrative woman.

"I hope you will come," she answered.

She paused before she spoke again. The sight of Redd's dark, controlled face affected her strangely. He seemed so large and strong that all at once she felt weak and unnerved. But she did not look unnerved. One might almost have said that she was cold. A strenuous effort toward composure so often gives a cold aspect.

"Florida doesn't agree with you, Mrs. Gerry," said Redd. "I didn't like it myself very well when I was there. But there are plenty who do like it. Let's see, you've been there more than a year, haven't you?"

"Yes; we went the fall before last, you know. We stayed all that year, and so much into this."

"I should think the summer must be dreadful there," remarked Redd.

Though he looked so calm, the young man hardly knew what he was saying. His eyes, roving about, had now seen that approaching figure in the pasture.

"Yes," said Mrs. Gerry, "the summer was dreadful. Day after day it was like being in an oven. The sun was like——"

Here she paused as if under the influence of something she could not resist.

"Walter," she said in a whisper, as though some one might overhear her, "haven't you got over it any? I hoped you would get over it long before this. Men are so different from women about such things."

"Got over it!" repeated the man. "I don't know how different men are, I'm sure. But I never shall get over it. There she is coming now."

Redd's features set themselves hardly. Still looking at the distant Salome, he asked:

"Where is Moore?"

"I don't know."

"What? Don't you know anything about him?"

"No."

"I didn't think he was like that," said Redd, with an accent of savageness. "I liked him. I couldn't help liking him."

"You needn't blame Mr. Moore," quickly replied Mrs. Gerry. "He did all he could. He was broken-hearted. But Salome held out. She said she thought it was for his good that she shouldn't be his wife. She said she hoped she could do anything for his good; but that she didn't care what became of her. Well," again came that pause in Mrs. Gerry's speech, "she held out then. Sometimes I don't know what she would do now. We don't talk of that time."

"It must have been something of great weight. I am not asking what it was, Mrs. Gerry, that could make Salome take such a stand."

Redd still watched the girl.

"Yes, it was of great weight," was the answer.

"Perhaps in time the obstacles will be removed."

"No," replied the woman. Then somewhat hurriedly: "Walter, I know what you are thinking. But don't fix your mind upon any such thing."

Redd did not reply. He was now perfectly calm in appearance. He left Mrs. Gerry and walked with his deliberate, masterful kind of movement toward the roadside fence.

Salome had nearly reached the fence. Her thin, sensitive face lighted with pleasure. She hastened. She took Redd's offered hand, and he almost lifted her over into the highway.

"How good it is to see you, Walter!" she exclaimed.

Her voice rang clear and steady; her eyes shone. The delicate pallor of her face had been browned over by the Florida sun and wind; but no flush rose beneath the tan. She did not color now any more than when Miss Nunally had asked her why she never blushed.

"I hope you're glad to get home, Salome," said Redd.

She smiled.

"It was time for me to come home," she answered, "and I am glad, any way," correcting herself, "I'm glad on mother's account. Poor mother!" putting her hand through Mrs. Gerry's arm, "she doesn't love the South. She's a Yankee; aren't you, mother? A Yankee of the Yankees."

"And pray what are you, Salome?" asked Redd.

"I?" laughing. "I'm one of those lizards that come out and bask in the sun. You mustn't tell me that lizards don't have their uses, Walter."

But Redd had no sympathy with this kind of talk. He hardly knew what it meant. He thought Salome seemed older. She ought not to seem older in less than two years. He must acknowledge that she looked in good health; not red, aggressive health, of course. He glanced away from her over the fields. Her face was just as sensitive, only the lines were strengthened somehow by firmer health.

Redd felt that she was far away from him. But how friendly she was! How many times he had wondered if he should ever see her again. He had given up thinking he should ever see her, and here she was standing beside him talking to him in the voice he remembered. He wondered why, now that he was with her once more, the time since he saw her should seem even longer than it had done.

"I'm going to settle down and be of some use in the world," said Salome. "I'm going to take care of my mother now," glancing as she spoke at her mother. "She has always had lurking fears that I was not practical. I'm going to prove to her now that she has been wrong."

Redd's eyes were on the elder woman as he asked:

"What is she going to do?" But it was the girl who answered:

"I'm first assistant at the High School. I take Miss Riddle's place. I'm useful. I support my mother. I hold my head up in the world."

"I never noticed as you held your head down," responded Redd. He tried to say something about how rejoiced he was that she had regained her health. He thought he said it very awkwardly. When he had done the two women moved forward, wishing him good-night with hearty cordiality.

The young man kept along the upper road, his hands deep in his pockets, his head bent. At a curve he paused and looked back. As he gazed his face hardened more and more. If he had been a man who ever talked to himself, he would now have said aloud:

"Walter Redd, I didn't know you were such a fool."

But he did not speak. Presently he was round the corner and could not see the two women any more. Presently, also, the red faded from the sky and a mist rose from all the low places where the frogs were peeping.

"It is like the frogs in the moat at Augustine," said Salome. "How warm it must be down there now! And do you suppose it is Mrs. Job Maine's day for 'thur shakes?' "

The girl laughed, and her mother laughed in response. They were very cheerful. And they soon fell to talking about the High School, and Salome said she must furbish up her mathematics; she was never strong in mathematics.

"I hope you won't get too tired," said Mrs. Gerry. "You are not used to being shut up in a room all day."

"Oh, I shan't get too tired," was the reply. "There's lots of work in me. It's time I was beginning it; don't you think so? Mother," catching her mother's glance, "you needn't worry one bit about me. I long to work; and I'm tough," laughing again: "I'm what they call 'tough as a knot.' It's going to be your turn to take things easy now. I shall bring my wages to you, and you will save them. I shall have fifty dollars a month, you know. How much do you think it will cost us to live—to be fairly comfortable? I needn't have beefsteak very often in these days. I'm well."

The girl straightened her slender figure. "What's good enough for you is good enough for me."

She turned toward her mother and suddenly drew her mother's hand through her arm. Mrs. Gerry could not help smiling at the thrifty calculation as to ways and means.

"How much do you think it will cost us to live?" repeated the girl.

"The rent will be four dollars a month," was the reply. "Twenty-five dollars ought to cover everything. But your clothes——"

"I don't mean they shall be anything at present. Be thankful I am not vain, mother. Then we can save the rest of my salary toward what I owe Mrs. Darrah."

"Yes, that is what I was thinking. In two years, if we are well, with what I can help, she will be paid."

Mrs. Gerry spoke with a kind of unconscious solemnity. The two women walked on in silence for a few moments. The farmhouse to which they were going now stood before them, looking black against the pale light of the west. There had come a chill in the air, though the day had been warm.

"I wish you had worn your shawl," said Mrs. Gerry anxiously. "Let us hurry."

"I am not cold; and I don't want to hurry," responded the girl. She held her mother back a little, hesitating before she said, "I suppose you are very anxious about that debt, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I knew that very well." Then Salome continued in a light tone, "but we needn't worry in the least. Mrs. Darrah has so much money that even Portia Nunally could not spend it nearly all. There'll be no harm done if I never pay it."

"Salome!"

"No," repeated the younger woman with a persistent disregard, "not the least harm. I'm not going to lie awake o' nights thinking of that."

"Certainly you need not lie awake nights," said Mrs. Gerry patiently, "but we'll save all we can. It is a just debt. And Mrs. Darrah has been kind. It is a just debt." A trifle of hardness came into the speaker's voice as she spoke those words a second time.

Salome gazed at her companion through the gathering dusk. Then she said, still lightly:

"Oh, yes, I know it is just. But how unlovely justice is! Mother, I hate justice!"

Mrs. Gerry made no answer. The two walked quickly up the path toward the door of the house.

The next moment Salome was seized upon by the three-year-old son of the family, who had been allowed to sit up for her return. The two were instantly in the gayest of frolics. Salome's laughter and song sounded through the rooms.

Mrs. Gerry and her sister-in-law sat talking in a desultory fashion about what should be put into the house at the Ledge. The brother's wife was going to lend some old furniture which had been her father's, and which was now in the attic.

"What good company S'lome is!" exclaimed the hostess. "I do b'lieve my childrun'd soon love her's well's they do me. She's real well now, ain't she?"

"Yes."

"I'm awful glad. But somehow sh'd be kinder 'fraid if she was mine to have her in such good spirits. Jest hear her!" as the child's laugh and the girl's laugh rang out from the bedroom where it was supposed that the boy was being put to bed.

"I'm sure I don't mean to worry because Salome is in good spirits," answered Mrs. Gerry. "There's worry enough in the world without going to meet it in that way."

"Mebby there is," with a shake of the head, "but I'm always anxious when folks seem too happy."

The speaker paused with the air of having something more to say. "I have heard," she went on, "that S'lome's ben disappointed sence she went South. Would you jest as lieves tell me if there was any young man payin' attention to her down there?"

Mrs. Gerry could not help hesitating an instant. She resented the question; but she must meet it in some way.

"It wasn't a place," she said finally, "where we should be likely to meet young men. Why, it was the lonesomest, most God forsaken spot you can imagine."

"Odd S'lome liked it, wasn't it?"

"She was getting well all the time, you know," was the answer.

"That does make a difference. I remember when Robert was gittin' up from that fever——"

And now the woman was well started on a long retrospect; Mrs. Gerry yielded to a sense of relief. But she could not forget that remark about her daughter's having been "disappointed" in Florida. Who could have said such a thing as that? Who could possibly know anything of what had happened there? Although Mrs. Gerry was not a woman of impulse, yet she was conscious now of an impulse to go away to some place where she and her daughter were not known. But all through those long, those interminable months in the South, she had hoped and waited for the time to come when she could return to her native town. She desired with intensity that she might dwell among those rocky pastures, under that sky. There had hardly been an hour when she had not fought against homesickness. The very balm of the air "went against her," as she would have said. She wished for that east wind which sweeps savagely in from the coast.

Still Mrs. Gerry would not have acknowledged that she felt such a longing. She considered it a weakness which she must fight down.

Salome often said that her mother's idea of being good was to fight some tendency all the time. If she did not readily find a tendency, a little self analysis would be sure to reveal one. But she said this smilingly, and hanging tenderly about her mother.

Now as Mrs. Gerry thought of what her sister-in-law had said, and heard Salome's gay voice, she wanted to put her hand to her head as if such a gesture would help her to think clearly.

It certainly was very confusing to live with Salome. It certainly tended to upset many of the elder woman's lifelong theories. Mrs. Gerry knew that her theories must be right. They were right. They admitted of no different interpretation from what she had always given them. Truth and self-denial. To tell and live the truth; and to sacrifice one's self.

A sudden quiet had come upon the occupants of the adjoining bedroom. The only sound now heard was the droning sound of the voice of the woman who was telling how Robert was when getting up from his fever.

Mrs. Gerry saw her daughter's figure appear noiselessly in the doorway. The girl held up her finger and glanced back, smiling.

The story of how Robert got up from his fever suddenly ceased.

"Is Benny asleep?" asked Benny's mother.

Salome nodded.

"Well," said Benny's mother, "mebby he'll let you play with him again to-morrer."

Salome said in that case she would try to wait until to-morrow. She came forward and sat down in a large chair, leaning back in it and stretching out her feet in a way that her hostess felt to be graceful, but also dimly felt to be in some manner not exactly the position for a girl to take. She thought vaguely that "mebby it was unladylike." She told herself that she had "kinder forgotten that S'lome Gerry was jes' she was. She was a real nice girl, 'n' you was drawed to her some way. There was Benny now"—remembering how Benny had screamed a few hours before because Salome had not come as soon as he had expected her. And when the mother thought of Benny's devotion, she forgave Salome for not sitting upright in a chair as the feminine human being ought.

The woman looked narrowly at the girl that she might decide if she saw signs of her guest having been "disappointed." It seemed to her that if a girl were disappointed she must bear a distinct and unmistakable sign of it somewhere upon her. She did not know precisely what this sign was, still she thought she should know it if she saw it.

Salome's face and head were well defined against the shabby dark covering of the chair; and the kerosene lamp stood on the table at the other side of her.

As a girl who had been to Florida for her health and had come back cured she would be interesting, though it was very difficult for one to believe that merely staying in Florida would cure anybody "without medicine nor' nothing." If it had been bitters now—but Salome must be odd indeed to be cured "jest by climate."

"Be you asleep S'lome?" asked the woman.

"No," said Salome without opening her eyes.

"I was goin' to tell you that my husband heard, when he went to mill this mornin', that Walter Redd was shinin' up to Mr. Leech's second daughter. Walter used to be one of your beaus, didn't he, S'lome?"

"I could almost say that he used to be my only beau," Salome replied, still without changing her position or opening her eyes.

The woman laughed a little. She kept a close watch on the girl.

"I hope you ain't goin' to feel bad if he should marry Sarah Leech," she remarked. "Sarah'll have as much as $2,000 if she outlives her aunt Sarah, I expect. I guess Walter wouldn't be sorry if his wife had some money."

"He ought to be glad," responded Salome.

In the pause that followed these words, Mrs. Gerry felt again the stirring of that wish that she and her daughter had not come back to a place where they were known. She wondered how Salome was feeling about this questioning, which was presently resumed.

"I s'pose you knew lots of fellers when you was in Floridy, didn't you?" was the next inquiry.

Mrs. Gerry turned her face away that she might not appear to be listening. She knew that their hostess was now in pursuit of some clew to the "disappointment."

In these days the mother did not quite know what to expect of her daughter. There were times when the two almost seemed strangers to each other, so alien were their moods.

Salome now opened her eyes and turned them toward her interlocutor.

"It was a very lonesome place," she said. "We really knew only two men while we were there. What is it that you want to know? If you will only ask me point blank, why—perhaps I'll answer you," with a laugh.

Benny's mother drew herself up somewhat at this. She said she didn't know as she was one that ever wanted to pry into other folks's business; but bein' connected with the Gerrys so, she had been arst things that, if she knew, mebby she could stop folks's mouths.

"There isn't the least necessity for stopping folk's mouths," said Salome, "let them remain gaping and unfilled."

The woman stared for a moment in angry perplexity. It was a fresh grievance that Salome should answer in that way. And dimly she was aware of a sense of thunder. Salome rose slowly. She stretched her arms above her head. She had always, but now more than ever, a kind of freedom and spontaneity of bodily movement that resembled the movement of a graceful animal.

"Mother, I am so sleepy," she said.

The two went upstairs to the room they occupied together. When the door had closed upon them the girl turned and grasped her companion's arm. Her eyes shone; but her voice did not accord with her glance as she asked:

"What was she talking about?"

"I don't know. She was curious. You know how they are here," answered Mrs. Gerry.

"Yes, oh yes, I know. And you like to be among such people, mother. They are your kind, in a way. But as for me——" the girl put the palms of her hands together with a suggestion of violence—"I hate them."

When she had spoken thus Salome evidently tried to control herself.

"Does Job Maine suit you better?" inquired Mrs. Gerry.

But Salome did not answer. She had gone to the window and had thrown up the sash. She leaned out, inhaling the cool, damp air of the night. There was a heavy scent of rank green leaves in the air, and the same whippoorwill, the girl thought, that had sung when she was a child, was again singing in the bushes across the road.

"Mother," said Salome, after a while, "something happened to me to-day."

As she spoke with her head out of the window Mrs. Gerry did not hear distinctly at first, and the words had to be repeated. But Salome still leaned there in the same position. Her mother sat down quickly. She wished that she could stop being so much on the alert all the time.

"Nothing unpleasant I hope," she said calmly.

"That's just as you take it," replied Salome. She came back into the room and closed the window. She put her cold hands on her mother's arm.

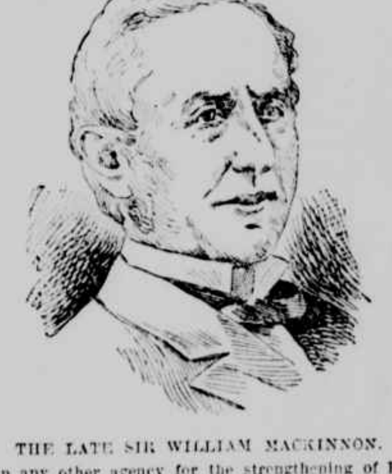
"It happened to me that I wrote a letter to—are you listening, mother?—to Mr. Moore."

(To be continued.)

TO THE HEART OF AFRICA.

THE PROPOSED RAILROAD FROM THE ZANZIBAR COAST TO VICTORIA LAKE.

It is a curious coincidence that the publication of an official report on the Mombasa-Uganda Railroad and the death of Sir William Mackinnon should have occurred at almost precisely the same time. For that railroad was that canny Scotchman's pet scheme. It was Sir William, as the world knows, who gave England an empire in East Central Africa, and who sent Mr. Stanley in to the relief of Emin Pacha. For several years he has been urging Government aid and sanction for the building of a railroad from Zanzibar to Uganda. Such a road would, he urged, do more



THE LATE SIR WILLIAM MACKINNON.

than any other agency for the strengthening of British interests in that part of the world, for the suppression of the slave trade, and for the civilization of Africa. Moreover, it would, commercially, be a paying enterprise, after a time. This project has been often discussed in Parliament, and now, just as its author has ended his work in this world, full of years and honors, a blue book has appeared on the subject, giving, with other things, some account of the surveys and estimates that have been made.

There have been made surveys of routes of about 3,700 miles, which is more than four times the actual length of railway. The estimated length of the projected railway by the route selected is 657 miles. This is greater than was expected. Former estimates, made in 1891, by General Williams, Sir John Fowler and others, from existing maps, varied between 500 and 600 miles. The increased length is due partly to a geographical error in the position of the eastern shores of Lake Victoria, and partly to the adoption of a longer but easier route. The estimated cost is $11,200,000, being an average of $17,045 per mile. The gauge proposed is 3 feet 6 inches, to conform to that of the existing railways in Egypt and South Africa. No tunnelling will be necessary. As regards the bridges, there are none which would be considered in India of even the second class in point of size. It has been considered advisable to recommend the general use of steel sleepers rather than creosoted fir or pingado wood for the following reasons: A permanent way of this construction is practically indestructible to natives with such few mechanical appliances as are to be met with in East Africa. The custom of firing the grass at certain periods of the year and the temptation to use the timber sleepers for fuel or cutting purposes would expose a line laid with timber sleepers to many risks. White ants are numerous in the country and commit great ravages. The steel sleeper has also no tendency to float and be carried away by flood water, which is the case with timber. It is anticipated that the construction of the railway will have such a revolutionary effect in settling the country that when the line is opened for traffic there will be little danger of Masai, or other natives, interfering with the telegraph line, and that beyond the ordinary station staff, permanent way gangs and railway police, no special guards or patrols will be necessary for its protection. At the same time it is recognized that stretching iron wire across wide expanses of unsettled country where iron wire is the staple article of barter is inviting constant interruption of line, unless numerous posts are established and patrolling is frequently resorted to for its protection. If, therefore, any difficulty should be experienced, though none is anticipated, in the case of the projected railway telegraph, a well organized system of heliographic communication could easily be established. This would answer nearly as well for initial railway requirements, and beyond very occasional breaks due to bad weather, would not be liable to any interruption on the part of the natives.

The station buildings and offices first erected might be either of wattle and daub construction, with grass thatched roofs, and fitted with doors and windows, or on sections where good clay is obtainable could be built of sun-dried bricks or burnt brick set in mortar. But this latter form of construction, involving, as it does, skilled labor, would be more expensive than the former, which, with the exception of the doors and windows, could be done by local labor but little assisted. The station buildings and yard should be surrounded by a strong, live thorn "boma," or inclosure, about fifty yards away, which would render arrows harmless. The plank house can be converted into a small place of refuge by inclosing the rail supports with corrugated iron sheeting. At third-class or ordinary watering stations 1,500 feet of "level" will be allowed, and permanent way for sidings to the extent of 2-5 mile. At second-class or changing stations 2,000 feet of level and 1 1-2 miles of extra permanent way will be allowed. At these stations accommodation will be required for first-class passengers, who will have to pass the night; two rooms with appurtenances will probably be sufficient, of the same construction as the other buildings. Permanent structures of masonry or brickwork will be required at the terminal stations of Mombasa and Victoria, and also at Kikuyu, the centre of the line; and in addition an erecting shed and shop, for engines, etc., at Mombasa. At second-class or changing stations small lean-to or open sheds, either of rail and corrugated iron construction or of brickwork, will answer all requirements for petty running affairs. An engine-shed of the simplest construction will also be required at these stations for stabling one engine.

The harbor of Lake Victoria, at the terminus of the railway, is at the northeast corner of the lake, in Kavirondo. It is inclosed by the Uganda promontory of Usoga on the west, by the Samia Hills on the east, and to the south is situated the long rocky island of Masinga. These promontories and the island completely protect the harbor from the storms which sometimes rise from the southeast. From the base of the Samia Hills the ground slopes gently to the water's edge, and is open, affording ample space for a terminal station, with the necessary shops, engine-house, sheds, etc. Toward the north is a sandy cove, always used by the Wasoga and others for landing and beaching their canoes. The fathom line is distant from twenty to fifty yards from the water's edge, and the variation in water level is inappreciable.

If this road shall be built, as seems probable, it will certainly be a most important factor in the opening up of that part of Africa to trade and civilization. Especially will it thus give access to Uganda, which Mr. Stanley has called the Pearl of Africa. It will also be a worthy monument to a great man, who showed himself great in many things and on many occasions. Speaking of Sir William Mackinnon and his career, in "The London Graphic," the Marquis of Lorne cites this, among various other instances of his soundness of judgment and his indomitable will: "When associated with others, older and of more experience in banking than himself, in the directory of the Glasgow Bank, he protested against a procedure which he thought bad, and, finding that he was not listened to, he resigned. Years afterward, when the policy he had objected to brought down the institution with a crash from which many persons in Scotland still greatly suffer, it was attempted to make him responsible for the failure. Advisers came to him begging him, in his own interest, to compromise the matter. They argued that it would damage his reputation if his name were dragged into the law suit, that a given payment would be taken in satisfaction, that he had best compromise the matter, and then he would hear no more of it. Nothing could have happened better calculated to show the metal of Mr. Mackinnon. He declared he would fight it to the end. He was unjustly assailed, and he would show the world that it was so. Not a bawbee would he pay for a compromise. He had given counsel long years before, which had been rejected, and he had declined to have anything to do with the bank if guided on the principles he condemned. He would prove to all men that he was right. And so the indictment was brought, and they attempted to make him liable for that which nine years before he had left the directory for condemning. But, after a weary trial, instead of trouble, came justification and triumph; for the judges, one after the other, in giving judgment, not only exonerated him from all blame, but expressed their sorrow that the advice he had given had not been taken. If Mr. Mackinnon's voice had been listened to, the Glasgow Bank smash would never have occurred."

Sir William's will, which has been published, disposes of a very considerable fortune in a characteristic manner. Exclusive of other provisions to his widow and nephews, and an annuity to his sister-in-law, the testator specifically leaves in life rent and fee to his widow, relatives and friends sums amounting to about $1,300,000. Particulars are given of the setting aside of $100,000 for bursaries for the promotion of the education of deserving and needful young men attending the Scottish University, of the name of Mackinnon, who can show their Highland descent of that name for at least two generations previous; of young male Highlanders born in the counties of Bute, Argyle, Inverness or Ross; of young ladies or girls of the name of Mackinnon; and of children of poor but respectable Highland parents belonging to, or brought up, or resident in or near his native place, Campbelltown; $50,000 is set apart to promote the education of Gaelic-speaking students, $50,000 for missions in India, and $100,000 for annuities for aged or invalided missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland or their widows or families.

THE SEASON TICKET WAS GOOD.

From the Washington Star.

"Looky here," said Farmer Begosh in a Chicago restaurant, "can't I get anything to eat on this meal ticket?"

"What kind of a ticket is it?" asked the waiter.

"It's a season ticket."

"All right; help yourself. Here they are: salt, pepper, vinegar and mustard."